

**Testimony of LANDMARK WEST!
Certificate of Appropriateness Committee
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Regarding Riverside Park Between 83rd and 91st Streets
April 26, 2005**

LANDMARK WEST! is a non-profit community organization committed to the preservation of the architectural heritage of the Upper West Side.

The Certificate of Appropriateness Committee wishes to comment on the application to construct a bicycle and pedestrian path from West 83rd Street to West 91st Street.

First and importantly, we wish to thank the Parks Department for arranging for their landscape architect to present to our Committee this much-needed and long-overdue project to complete discontinuous sections of the bike and pedestrian pathway along the waterfront of Riverside Park. Unfortunately, the design, as now proposed, does not succeed in the way we all had hoped, based on plans that were presented to the community more than a decade ago.

Back then, the idea was to cantilever the path gracefully out over the water, achieving the dual function of providing eco-friendly recreational access to the waterfront and creating a work of wonderful design. The design proposed today would succeed neither functionally nor aesthetically.

Our Committee's concerns and recommendations are summarized as follows:

- 1) **The proposed path jags sharply out over the water in two places** (at approximately 86th and 90th Streets). These angles, which appear awkward in plan, would almost certainly be exaggerated in reality, creating a pedestrian and cyclist experience that would be aesthetically compromised at best, and potentially dangerous at worst. It was explained to us that, because the bulkhead cannot be used as bearing, the span of the pathway over the bulkhead must be as short as possible.
- 2) **Cantilevering the pathway over the bulkhead, as originally planned, would address this problem.** It would also preclude the equally jarring prospect of steel piles that would be needed to support the pathway structure from below. Many New Yorkers use the water on a regular basis and can attest to the visual blight of steel piles where they have been used for piers and other utilitarian infrastructure. In addition to the North River Historic Ship Society, the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance has reviewed this proposal and feels that a cantilevered structure would be more respectful of the historic seawall.

Beauty and function need not be mutually exclusive propositions. Here is a case where engineering ingenuity would fundamentally improve the aesthetics of this project and create a piece of desirable infrastructure that is also a work of design worthy of the Landmark Riverside Park waterfront. If the Department of Environmental Conservation is holding this project to stringent standards of environmental conservation, then those of us who care about the beauty and recreational function of the waterfront should be no less rigorous in upholding the highest standards of good urban design.

We understand that the State Historic Preservation Office will also weigh in on this project because it uses federal funds. We urge all of the agencies involved to take advantage of this opportunity to make this project happen – *the right way*.